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May 24, 1992

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# Region study finds contaminated food in 50% of restaurants

By **ROB KELLY**  
Special to the Halton Hills Weekend

Halton Region's chief health officer admits to being "surprised" by the number of area restaurants and institutions his inspectors have caught serving contaminated food.

Food handling was the problem in every case. Faulty preparation of one sort or another meant a full 53 per cent of the establishments tested made meals with unacceptable bacteria levels.

Regional inspectors found 129 of 241 kitchens tested (53 per cent) fell down by cooling food too slowly, or leaving it out at room temperature too long. In 74 restaurants (31 per cent), utensils or preparation surfaces were improperly cleaned, leading to bacteria contamination. In another 11 per cent, or 46 kitchens, staff didn't use proper personal hygiene and contaminated the food with their hands.

The numbers are "certainly a lot higher than what I expected to find," said Dr. Bob Nosal, the regional chief medical officer of health, Monday.

Regional food inspectors will beef up their efforts to educate restaurant workers in proper food handling, Dr. Nosal said, primarily by stressing where the high risk activities take place in meal preparation. Proper temperature storage, work surface cleaning and hygiene will be the main elements emphasized. As well, inspectors plan to spend more time in each restaurant they check.

Halton's director of environmental health, Peter Willmott, also admitted to being "surprised by the results. It certainly points out the need to be ever vigilant. It's clear the results indicate there are certain risks (in eating out)."

## Woman charged after investigation

A Milton woman has been arrested for falsely reporting she was sexually assaulted. Police now believe her story was fabricated and her injuries were self-inflicted.

On March 26, the 26 year old reported a man posing as a water meter reader entered her home, went to the basement to read the meter, and when he returned he sexually assaulted her. A two month investigation of over 700 hours cost the Halton Regional Police Service over \$15,000.

There are 13 people working on inspections in Mr. Willmott's department, with something "less than half" devoted to full-time restaurant scrutiny.

Inspectors have other duties related to pressing public health concerns that can infringe on food examinations. In Oakville, for example, only 40 per cent of scheduled kitchen inspections were carried out last year because his staff devoted a good deal of their time to dealing with public complaints about odors from the Petro Canada refinery, Mr. Willmott said.

There are roughly 450 restaurants in Halton and the goal is to visit each of them three times a year, Mr. Willmott added. But because of staffing constraints, "we have not been able to achieve that."

The three most common forms of food poisoning bacteria are salmonella, campylobacter and giardia. They all cause intestinal disorders and can make an adult sick with abdominal cramps, fever and diarrhea. In the very young and the old, such food poisoning can cause death, Dr. Nosal said.

In 1991, reported cases of bacteria-related illness in Halton were up marginally for salmonella contamination over 1990 (128 cases to 117), about stable for campylobacter (248 to 246) and down somewhat in the case of giardia (97 from 123). Health officials attribute 74 per cent of all such bacterial illnesses to food poisoning.

It's hard to get a real handle on food poisoning because most people afflicted don't phone the regional health department to talk about it, Dr. Nosal said. The number of confirmed food poisoning cases is probably just "the tip of the iceberg," he noted.

## Police Blotter

### House break-in

A Norval residence was broken into during the day Tuesday while the owner was not home. According to police, someone forced open a side door using a pry bar to pry the deadbolt from the door frame. They headed to the master bedroom, where they removed a color television and a VCR. A vase was thrown on the floor in the living room, but nothing else was stolen or disturbed, police said. There have been several rural break-ins in Halton Hills over the past few weeks. Police believe the break-ins may be related.

### Arrest made

An 18 year-old Georgetown man was arrested and charged Wednesday with a break-in at Centennial School which happened on Easter weekend. Someone pried at and smashed a window on the east side of the school, then crawled inside, and began ransacking desks and looking for money, police said. A small fire was started with some papers on top of a desk, but the fire extinguished itself. The man is to appear in court in Milton June 19.

The same man has been charged with a break-in at a Georgetown residence on Eden Place over night March 19. Someone threw a log through a window, and went inside and removed some liquor, a jacket and a remote control truck.

### Stolen boots

A Georgetown resident was charged Wednesday with breaking into Rhonda's Runners two years ago and stealing some boots. According to police, on June 27, 1990, a man taped a window then smashed the glass, removing pieces one at a time, so nothing could be heard.

### In parking lot

Police have no new information on a sexual assault which took place in the parking lot of a Norval club last weekend, but the owners of the club want the public assured the alleged crime took place in the parking lot before the man and woman had even visited their establishment, having come from a Brampton bar.

## SPRING YARD & GARDEN COLLECTION SCHEDULE

The Town of Halton Hills is expanding its yard and garden waste collection schedule in the hopes of diverting even greater volumes of refuse from our landfill. This program will run in conjunction with our Home Composting Program. Home composters will be available again this year pending provincial funding.

Materials such as grass clippings, flower stalks, leaves and other related yard and garden wastes are acceptable for pick up. Brush put at the curb for collection should be bundled or tied in lengths no greater than 4 feet (1-2 m). Twigs or branches should not exceed 1/2 inch (12 mm) in diameter.

Please place your yard and garden materials at the curbside in clear plastic bags before 7:30 a.m. on the following days:

June 1  
June 8  
June 15

COME ON HALTON HILLS!

IT ONLY WORKS IF WE ALL DO OUR PART!



For more information contact the Public Work Section at 873-2600, Ext. 374.

R.C. Austin, P.Eng.  
Town Engineer

## MAIN STREET CANADA

A Presentation

by

Stephen Lauer

Ontario Regional Director

Heritage Canada

Wednesday, June 3, 1992

8:00 P.M.

The Gallery

Georgetown Cultural Centre

Since 1979, Heritage Canada has developed and implemented the Main Street Program to assist downtowns and communities reach their potential in economic, physical, and social rejuvenation. Comeout to hear Mr. Lauer speak about this interesting and potentially useful program.

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